

The Legend of Diarmuid and Grania.

AT the time that Finn MacCumhail was getting to be old, and Oisín his son was a strong grown man, it came into his mind to find another wife, for it was a long time since his wife that was daughter of Maighneis Mac Moirne had died from him. And the one he set his mind on was Grania, daughter of Cormac, King of Tara, the most beautiful of the women of Ireland. Her father was willing to give her, for Finn had a great name in Ireland, and all was settled, and a feast was made ready.

But when Finn, and the chief men of the Fianna, came for the wedding, and Grania saw him, and that he looked to be older than her father, Cormac, with the hardships and the fighting he had gone through, she had no mind to marry him, but she looked around at the men that were with him, and she set her mind there and then upon Diarmuid, grand-son of Duibhne, that was young and comely, and that was called the best lover of woman to be found in the whole world.

So she called for a vessel of ale, and she put an enchantment of sleep in the ale, and then she gave a drink of it to Finn, and to the most of the men that were there, and they had no sooner tasted it than a deep sleep came upon them.

But she gave none of the ale to Diarmuid, but she bade him to bring her away out of the house before Finn and her father would awake. And he was not willing at first to meddle with a woman that was promised to Finn MacCumhail, but in the end he brought her away, and all in the house lying in their sleep, but only Oisín and Caoilte and Oscar.

When Finn awoke from his sleep there was great anger on him, and he sent his men to follow the tracks of Diarmuid and Grania, and it is what he told them, that if they did not come up with them at the first ford, he would hang them from each side of it. And this was the beginning of the hunting of Diarmuid and Grania by Finn all through Ireland, that lasted seven years. And all through that time they had many hardships and many escapes, and it is a wonder how they went through all they did, but there were some that helped them.

One time they were at Doire dha Bhoth, and Finn came very near them and was pressing on; but Oisín sent a warning to them through Finn's own hound, Bran, that had as great a love for Diarmuid as he had for his

own master. And the hound found them in their sleep in an enclosed place they had made, with seven doors to it, and he thrust his head into Diarmuid's bosom and awaked him. But it would have gone hard with them even then, but Angus Og, son of the Dagda, that knew of their danger, came and brought Grania away with him to Dos da Shoileach under the cover of his cloak. And as for Diarmuid, he took his sword, and stood up like a straight pillar in the enclosed place. And Finn put a man at every one of the seven doors to guard it, and Diarmuid would not go out by any door but the one Finn himself was guarding, for the other men of the Fianna were some of them his dear friends, and he would not bring Finn's anger on them by escaping through the door they had in their charge. But he took the shaft of his spear in his hand, and gave a very high light leap over the door where Finn was, and slipped away beyond him and his people, and then he looked back and called out to them that he had passed them, and he slung his shield upon his back, and followed Grania westwards.

And then they two went on by themselves, and it was the advice Angus gave them, not to go into a cave that had but one opening, or into an island that had but one harbour, and wherever they would cook their food, not to eat it there, and wherever they would eat, not to sleep in that place, for all the time Finn would be following after them.

And after that they went along the Siona to the marshy bog of Finn-liath, and there they met with a young man, and he said his name was Muadhan, and that he would serve them by day and watch for them by night. And that evening he made a bed of soft rushes and birch tops for them in a cave, and then he broke off a straight rod from a quicken tree, and he put a hair on it and a fork, and a berry on the fork, and went and stood by a stream, and with the three berries he dropped in the stream, he brought up three fishes. And he cooked the three fishes on a spit, and he gave the biggest to Diarmuid and the second biggest to Grania, and the one that was smallest he kept for himself. And after a while Muadhan left them, and they travelled on to Slieve Echtge, and Grania began to be tired out, but Diarmuid made a hut in the very heart of the wood, and killed a deer, and he and Grania eat and drank their fill of meat and of pure water. And Diarmuid went to the Searbhan Lochlannach, the surly one of Lochlinn, that kept the wood, and got leave from him to hunt and kill deer, so long as he would not meddle with the berries, that grew on the quicken-tree of Dubhros. That was a tree that had grown from a berry that was dropped by the Tuatha De Danaan one time when they were playing a game of hurling with the Fianna, and whoever eat these berries was free from all sickness after, and felt like as if he had been drinking wine. But the Tuatha De Danaan had sent the Searbhan Lochlannach to guard over the tree, and he slept in its top by night and stopped at its foot by day, and no one dared come near it. But when Grania heard of these berries a great desire and longing came on her, and she said

she would never lie down on a bed again, but would lose her life, if she could not get some of them, to taste them.

So Diarmuid went to the fierce giant, the Searbhan, that had made a desert of the place about him, and asked some of the berries, but he would not give them. And Diarmuid would not do treachery on him, but he attacked him then and there, and they fought fair, and the Searbhan gave him great strokes with his club, but Diarmuid killed him in the end.

Then Grania came to the tree, and he plucked berries from the branches and he gave them to her. And then they went up into the top of the tree where the Searbhan had made his bed, and the berries below were but bitter berries beside those that were above in the tree.

And Finn was following close after them, and he came to the foot of the tree, and he and his men eat their fill of the berries, and they sat down to rest through the heat of the day. And Finn asked for a chessboard, and himself and Oisín sat down to play. And after they had played awhile, Finn had come near to win, and there was only one move for Oisín to make, and he did not see it. Then Diarmuid, from the top of the tree, took aim with a berry at the man that should be moved, and hit it; and Oisín moved that man and turned the game against Finn. And the same thing happened a second and a third time, and then Diarmuid struck the third berry on the man that would win the game, and Oisín moved it, and all the Fianna let out a great shout. Then Diarmuid stood up in the top of the tree, and caught Grania to him and gave her three kisses, and the seven battalions of the Fianna standing around. And great anger and jealousy and a great weakness came on Finn when he saw that, and he called out to Diarmuid that he would lose his life for those three kisses.

And he would have made an end of him then and there, but Angus came to their help again, and he took Diarmuid's shape and appearance on him, and came to the foot of the tree, so that Finn's men attacked him, and Diarmuid gave a light leap from the tree and went away from them. And then Angus took Grania under his druid mantle, and brought her away to the Brugh na Buinne, and Diarmuid followed them there. And while they were there, Finn sent an old hag that was his foster-mother, and that had knowledge of witchcraft, to try could she make an end of Diarmuid. And he chanced to be out by himself, hunting. And the hag took a drowned leaf, and rose on it in a blast of cold wind, and came near Diarmuid, and began to strike at him from above, so that he was never in such great danger before, but at the last he made a cast of his spear that reached to the hag through the leaf, so that she fell dead on the spot.

But after that, Angus made a peace between Diarmuid and Grania on the one side, and Finn on the other side. And the place they settled in was Rath Grania in Ben Bulbin, and the people used to be saying there was no man in Ireland richer in sheep and cattle and gold and silver than Diarmuid was at that time.

But after a while Grania said it was a shame that the two best men in Ireland, her father Cormac and Finn Mac Cumhail, had never come to her house. And she made a great feast and brought them there.

Now it had been foretold that it was by a wild boar Diarmuid would get his death, and he was put under bonds never to join in the hunting of one. But one day he was hunting with Finn, and they came on the track of a boar, and Diarmuid left Finn and followed after the boar by himself, and it stopped and faced him. And Diarmuid made a cast of his spear at it, but it did not so much as give it a wound or a scratch. But at the last he killed it with the hilt of his sword, for the sword itself was broken, but before he did that, the boar had given him a deadly wound.

It was at this time Finn came up with him, and looked at him, and it is what he said, that he was glad to see his beauty turned to ugliness, and that he would like all the women of Ireland to be looking at him now. And Diarmuid asked him for a drink from the palms of his hands, that might cure him. And Finn was bringing him the water, but when the thought of Grania came upon him, he let it spill through his fingers, and the life went out from Diarmuid. When Grania heard of that, she made a great mourning and a great keening. And she gave it out that she was making all ready to bring a great vengeance on Finn, and to get satisfaction for Diarmuid's death.

But after a while, Finn went secretly to the place where she was and got to see her, in spite of all her high words. And whatever she said to him or he said to her, when he came back to the seven battalions of the Fianna that were waiting for him, there was Grania coming with him, like any new wife with her husband. And when the Fianna saw that, they gave three great shouts of laughter and mockery. And some said the change had come on her because the mind of every woman changes like the water in a running stream; but some said it was Finn that had put enchantment on her.

A. G.